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20 Evidence-Based Aphrodisiac Scents

By Leanna Serras

Scent is a powerful tool. Studies show that it's linked to memory and emotion, even more so than our other senses. But did you know it also plays a significant role in our love lives?

Throughout history, people have used aphrodisiac scents to set the mood. Ancient Indians mention using certain oils and spices in the Kama Sutra and Egypt's famous Queen Cleopatra is said to have used perfumes to seduce her lovers. Even the word itself is linked to love; "aphrodisiac" is derived from the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite.

As such, it should come as no surprise that scents are still commonly used for their erotic qualities. What's more, studies show that many of them actually work. Below, you'll find a list of 15 scents that can enhance desire, heighten the senses and boost vitality — all backed by science. Follow along for arousing scents for men and women and the top perfumes and colognes to match.

What Are Aphrodisiac Scents?

Aphrodisiac scents are fragrances that arouse sexual instinct by increasing desire, pleasure or performance. Aphrodisiac scents include pumpkin, lavender, vanilla, cinnamon, peppermint, ambrette, ylang-ylang, ginger, and more.

Despite some skepticism around the use of aphrodisiacs, studies show that many of these aromas do work — they can be easily incorporated into anyone's fragrance routine. Check out our list of scientifically proven aphrodisiac scents below.

Pumpkin Pie
One study found that the scent of pumpkin pie mixed with lavender **increased blood flow** to the nether regions by 40 percent when sniffed.

1. Pumpkin pie:

This traditional Thanksgiving dessert increases arousal in men. In fact, one study found that the scent of pumpkin pie mixed with lavender increased blood flow to the nether regions by 40 percent when sniffed.

Additionally, the smell of pumpkin pie mixed with the smell of doughnuts increased blood flow by 31.5 percent. Scientists speculate that the men might be reacting to the vanilla and cinnamon in the pie, both of which also made our list.

Popular Pumpkin Fragrances: Demeter Pumpkin Pie | Etat Libre d'Orange Like This

Lavender
The smell of lavender **relaxes and arouses** at the same time, which is a wonderful way to set the mood.

2. Lavender:

As mentioned above, the smell of lavender mixed with pumpkin pie was shown to increase arousal in men by 40 percent. However, lavender can stand on its own — the flower's scent has been proven to relax and arouse at the same time, which is a wonderful way to set the mood.

Popular Lavender Fragrances: YSL Libre | Ariana Grande Cloud | Amazing Grace

Vanilla
In a study of male Wistar rats, a 200 mg dose of vanillin demonstrated **aphrodisiac properties.**

3. Vanilla:

In a study of male Wistar rats, a 200 mg dose of vanillin demonstrated aphrodisiac properties. The aphrodisiac qualities of vanilla should come at little surprise, since vanilla's soothing scent has also been shown to increase arousal by 9 percent in men. Explore the Best Vanilla Perfumes guide and see the full set of vanilla scents for the best perfumes and colognes in this category.

Best-Selling Vanilla Perfumes & Colognes: Calvin Klein Obsession | Dolce & Gabbana The One | Boucheron Boucheron

Strawberry
The scent of strawberry **increased arousal** in people who were told the smell had that effect. The same results were not reported when subjects smelled other fruits.

4. Strawberry:

In one study, the sweet scent of strawberry increased arousal in people who were told the smell had that effect. While we would normally chalk this up to the placebo effect, the same results were not reported when subjects smelled other fruits, suggesting the smell may affect the body after all. Explore strawberry scents in the guide to the Best Fruity Perfumes for Women.

Arousing Strawberry Scents: YSL Mon Paris | Burberry Her | Kate Spade New York

Jasmine
A study that tested fragrances for aphrodisiac properties found that the **"winning blend"** was the aroma of jasmine.

5. Jasmine:

A study that tested several men's and women's fragrances for aphrodisiac properties found that the "winning blend" was the jasmine scent. Its rich, sweet smell has been used for centuries to improve libido and promote intimacy, which makes it one of the more well-known aphrodisiac scents for men and women alike.

Explore the Best Jasmine Perfumes guide for arousing jasmine scents.

Best-Selling Jasmine Perfumes: Dolce & Gabanna Light Blue | Calvin Klein Ck One | Elizabeth Arden Red Door

Ginger
A recent study of Chinese folk medicines found that ginger acts as a **circulatory stimulant** and that it can aid in erectile dysfunction.

6. Ginger:

Warming and spicy, ginger has been used throughout history as an aphrodisiac; more recently, ginger essential oil has been found to be energizing and uplifting. A recent study of Chinese folk medicines found that ginger acts as a circulatory stimulant and that it can aid in erectile dysfunction.

Popular Scents with Notes of Ginger: Twilly D'hermes Eau Ginger | Roger & Gallet Gingembre Rouge | Ralph Lauren Romance

Black Licorice
The scent of the controversial candy increases arousal in men by **13 percent.**

7. Black Licorice:

The scent of the controversial candy has been shown to increase arousal in men by 13 percent; when combined with the scent of doughnuts that number jumped to 32 percent. The sweet smell, which comes from anise, has been rumored to work on arousing women as well.

Top Licorice Fragrances: Demeter Licorice | Mugler Love You All

Cinnamon
Researchers found that the scent of cinnamon **increased sexual function** in aging male rats, suggesting it aids in erectile dysfunction.

8. Cinnamon:

While cinnamon has several documented benefits including antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects, it's also widely known as an aphrodisiac. To back up these claims, researchers found that the scent of cinnamon increased sexual function in aging, male rats, suggesting it might be an aid in erectile dysfunction.

Best Arousing Cinnamon Scents: Estee Lauder Cinnabar | Kilian Angels' Share | Mason Margiela Replica Autumn Vibes

Doughnuts
The scent of doughnuts **enhances the arousing effects** of other smells on the body.

9. Doughnuts:

In the study of the Human Male Sexual Response to Olfactory Stimuli, the scent of doughnuts were found to enhance the arousing effects of other smells on the body.

The smell of doughnuts on its own increased blood flow to the groin by only 7 percent, but the scent of doughnuts mixed with black licorice increased blood flow by 31 percent. Mixed with lavender, the doughnut smell increased blood flow by 18 percent and mixed with cola it increased 12 percent.

Here's the Best Sweet Perfumes to Consider.

Pink Grapefruit
Studies show that women who wear the scent of pink grapefruit are perceived to be **six years younger** on average.

10. Pink grapefruit:

Vitality plays a large part in human attraction, which is why pink grapefruit is considered an aphrodisiac. Studies show that women who wear the scent of pink grapefruit are perceived to be six years younger on average and therefore more attractive to men.

Best Grapefruit Perfumes: Hermes Eau De Pamplemousse Rose | Chanel Chance Eau Vive | 4711 Acqua Colonia Pink Pepper & Grapefruit

Orange
The scent of orange **increases blood flow** to the sexual organs, testing at a rate of 19 percent.

11. Orange:

Orange is another scent that's proven to increase blood flow to the sexual organs, testing at 19 percent. The smell of citrus has also been shown to increase alertness, which makes a person more sensitive to the stimuli around them.

Scents with Orange Notes: Demeter Sweet Orange | Eau D'orange Verte | Boss Orange

Sandalwood
Recent studies show that sandalwood elevates the pulse and **exhibits antidepressant and relaxing qualities.**

12. Sandalwood:

Used in eastern Indian Ayurvedic medicine, Sandalwood has often been touted as an aphrodisiac. Recent studies back up these claims, showing that sandalwood elevates the pulse and exhibits antidepressant and relaxing qualities.

Sandalwood Aphrodisiac Perfumes: Elizabeth Arden Sandalwood | Le Labo Santal 33 | Chanel Coco

Lily of the Valley
One study found that Lily of the Valley attracts sperm, making women **more likely to get pregnant** when wearing it during intercourse.

13. Lily of the Valley:

This floral scent, which is used in many modern fragrances, has potent aphrodisiac effects. One controversial study found that sperm were attracted to the fragrance, making women more likely to get pregnant when wearing it during intercourse. Another study found that the scent heightened arousal in men by 11 percent.

Best Lily of the Valley Perfumes: Yardley Lily of the Valley | Woods of Windsor Lily of the Valley | Floris Lily of the Valley

Rose
The scent of rose **fights depression and boosts confidence,** fertility and libido. It also helps regulate the nervous system, making people more responsive to touch.

14. Rose:

Floral rose scents has been used throughout time for medicinal reasons, and it's known to fight depression and boost confidence, fertility and libido. Ayurvedic practitioners will also tell you that it helps regulate the nervous system, making people more responsive to touch.

Learn more about the Best Rose Perfumes for Women.

Best-Selling Rose Perfumes: Elizabeth Arden White Diamonds | Burberry London (new) | Jimmy Choo Blossom

Peppermint
Several studies found peppermint **increases alertness** stimulating the brain and **dilating blood vessels** in the sexual organs.

15. Peppermint:

Named after the Greek nymph Minthe, the mistress of Pluto, god of the underworld, peppermint has deep ties to forbidden desire. Recent studies have found it an aphrodisiac for women — increasing alertness, stimulating the brain and dilating blood vessels in the sexual organs.

Minty Fragrances: Mancera Aoud Lemon Mint | Demeter Chocolate Mint

Patchouli
Patchouli oil contains chemical compounds that have been shown to stimulate the **release of endorphins** and increase blood flow, which heightens arousal and enhances pleasure.

16. Patchouli:

Patchouli is a musky and earthy scent that has been associated with sensuality and romance for centuries. The fragrance has long been used as an aphrodisiac due to its ability to create a warm, comforting atmosphere and evoke feelings of passion and intimacy. Patchouli oil contains chemical compounds that have been shown to stimulate the release of endorphins and increase blood flow, which can heighten arousal and enhance pleasure. The scent is also believed to have a grounding and calming effect, which can help reduce anxiety and promote relaxation, creating an ideal environment for love and intimacy. Patchouli's alluring aroma has made it a popular ingredient in perfumes, candles, and other romantic products, making it a staple in the world of fragrance and romance.

Best Patchouli Fragrances: Molinard Patchouli | Patchouli N'roses Perfume | Black Opium by Yves Saint Laurent

Ambrette
Ambrette contains a powerful compound called musk ketone, which has a sweet and musky aroma said to **stimulate the senses** and sexual desire.

17. Ambrette:

Ambrette, also known as musk mallow, is a fragrant plant that has been used for centuries as an aphrodisiac. The plant's seeds contain a powerful fragrance compound called musk ketone, which has a sweet and musky aroma that is said to stimulate the senses and enhance sexual desire. The scent of ambrette has a warm and inviting quality that is thought to create a romantic and sensual atmosphere. The fragrance is also believed to have a calming effect on the mind and body, which can help reduce anxiety and promote relaxation, allowing for a deeper connection between partners. Due to its alluring fragrance and reputed aphrodisiac properties, ambrette is often used in perfumes, colognes, and other romantic products, making it a popular choice for those seeking to enhance their romantic experiences.

Best Ambrette Fragrances: Dior Homme Intense | Ariana Grande God Is A Woman | Jo Malone Wood Sage & Sea Salt

Champaca
Several studies found Champaca to be used in traditional medicine due to its ability to have a calming effect on the mind and evoke **feelings of happiness**, joy, and euphoria.

18. Champaca:

Champaca, also known as champak or champa, is a flowering tree that is native to Southeast Asia. Its fragrant flowers have been used in traditional medicine and as a perfume ingredient for centuries. Champaca is believed to be an aphrodisiac scent due to its sweet, floral aroma that is said to stimulate the senses and enhance sexual desire. The fragrance of champaca is thought to have a calming effect on the mind and body, promoting relaxation and reducing stress, which can be beneficial for creating an intimate and romantic atmosphere. Additionally, the scent of champaca has been known to evoke feelings of happiness, joy, and euphoria, which can further enhance the romantic experience. Champaca is a popular ingredient in perfumes, candles, and other romantic products, making it a staple in the world of fragrance and romance.

Best Champaca Fragrances: Ormonde Jayne Champaca | Roja Parfums Britannia | Calvin Klein Euphoria

Saffron
Saffron, derived from the crocus flower, has been used for centuries to stimulate the senses and **enhance sexual desire** in Iran, India, and Greece.

19. Saffron:

Saffron, a spice derived from the stigma of the crocus flower, has been prized for its fragrance and medicinal properties for thousands of years. Its reputation as an aphrodisiac scent comes from its ability to stimulate the senses and enhance sexual desire. The scent of saffron is warm and earthy, with a hint of sweetness, and is believed to have a calming effect on the mind and body, reducing anxiety and promoting relaxation, which can be beneficial for creating an intimate atmosphere. Specifically, saffron contains crocin, a compound that has been shown to increase blood flow and improve sexual dysfunction in women with depression. Additionally, saffron has been known to improve mood and increase feelings of happiness, which can further enhance the romantic experience. Saffron is a popular ingredient in perfumes, candles, and other romantic products, making it a staple in the world of fragrance and romance.

Best Saffron Fragrances: Nishane Suede Et Saffron Perfume | Byredo Black Saffron | Baccarat Rouge 540 by Maison Francis Kurkdijan

Ylang-ylang
Shown to **reduce anxiety and promote relaxation,** ylang-ylang has been used in Indonesian cultures in a bride's wedding hair and clothing and also to adorn the wedding bed.

20. Ylang-ylang:

Ylang-ylang is a tropical flower that is native to Southeast Asia and is highly valued for its sweet and exotic fragrance. Its reputation as an aphrodisiac scent comes from its ability to create a romantic and sensual atmosphere. Ylang-ylang's scent is warm and floral, with a hint of spice, and is believed to reduce anxiety and promote relaxation, which can be beneficial for creating an intimate atmosphere. Indonesians have long used ylang-ylang on wedding nights, believing that its aroma would enhance the romantic experience. In Indonesian cultures, the flower is often used to adorn the wedding bed and is also incorporated into the bride's hair and clothing. The fragrance is said to evoke feelings of passion and desire, enhancing the connection between the newlyweds. Ylang-ylang is a popular ingredient in perfumes, massage oils, and other romantic products, making it a staple in the world of fragrance and romance.

Best Ylang-Ylang Fragrances: Franck Boclet Ylang Ylang Perfume | Gucci Bloom Profumo Di Fiori Perfume | Tom Ford Soleil Blanc

Natural Aphrodisiacs: Pheromones

A guide about aphrodisiac scents would not be complete without mentioning pheromones — the natural scents animals and humans secrete that induce activity. Pheromones are similar to hormones but work outside the body to affect the behavior of those around us.

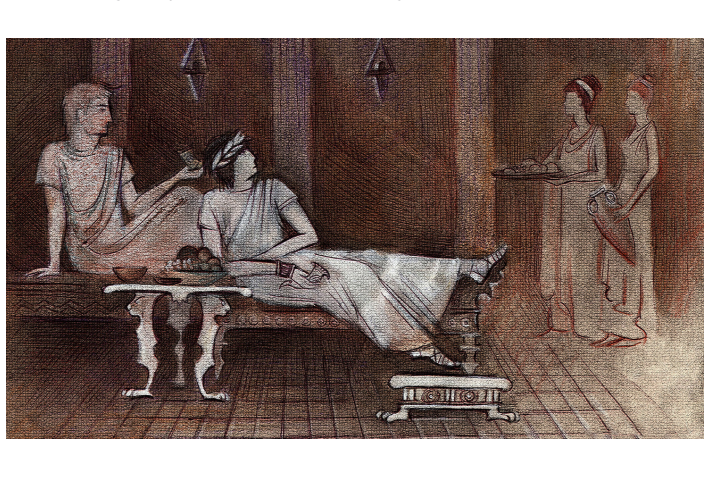
Animals use these subtle scents to raise alarm, trigger instincts, mark territory, bond a mother and offspring, and induce arousal. However, the jury is still out with regard to how much human pheromones affect behavior

Studies show that androstadienone, a component of male sweat, can affect the mood and increase arousal. Androstenol, a secreted female pheromone, is said to attract males while other studies show that the types of pheromones humans give off help them attract a more compatible partner.

Many scent companies have tried to concoct synthetic pheromones to add to their perfumes, but there is no evidence to prove they actually work. However, that doesn't stop people from trying their luck with synthetic pheromone fragrances.

Humans are driven by the smells around them, and desire is no different. In both ancient and modern times, these tried and true scents have proven the perfect addition to any date night, bedroom or fragrance. In fact, you can find many of these scents in popular perfumes and colognes. To spice up your love life, simply pick and scent and incorporate it into your daily routine, from spraying it on yourself in the form of perfume or using it in a candle or essential oil.

Read on in our Best Pheromone Perfumes of All Time guide to find the right aphrodisiac scent for you.



Aphrodisiac Scents Throughout History

Over the course of history, aphrodisiacs have been used to stimulate desire and lust. As we mentioned, ancient Egyptians used perfumed oils to set the mood. Cleopatra is said to have used cardamom, cinnamon and basil to seduce the likes of Mark Antony and Emperor Julius Caesar. It's also said that she bathed in a mix of milk and saffron because the Egyptians believed it had aphrodisiac qualities.

Both the Torah and the Bible's Old Testament mention using scents as aphrodisiacs, specifically calling out the erotic power of a fragrant "love-flower" found by Reuben to increase his mother Leah's fertility. The particular flower mentioned in the ancient texts were mandrakes.

The Greeks and Romans coveted aromatic spices and perfumes for their pleasant odors and aphrodisiac qualities. They would bathe and sprinkle themselves with scented oils and floral scents like rose, jasmine, lavender and chamomile. They even added animal compounds to their perfumes like deer musk, ambergris (a secretion from sperm whales) and civet from civet cats.

During the Renaissance, women who wanted to increase fertility had midwives make them potions of herbs and spices. Shakespeare even referenced perfume as an aphrodisiac, as well as burning herbs and incense.

As humans became more hygienic around the 1800s, scents became associated with fashion and trendiness. Women and men began to spray perfumes on themselves before meeting their lovers to increase their level of attractiveness. Even today, people use scents like vanilla, lavender, cinnamon and jasmine in perfumes to set the mood.

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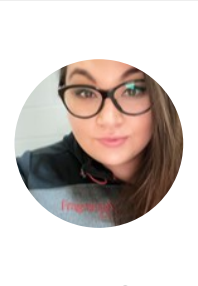

Leanna Serras

Leanna Serras is a well-versed fragrance writer with a passion for perfume. She has loved trying new perfumes since she was a child, and has tried everything from fruity to woodsy fragrances in her time cherishing scents. Outside of her love for writing and collecting perfume, Leanna enjoys fashion, skincare, "the Bachelorette," and kicking back on the beach.

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